

Message Text

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ACTION IO-13

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AF-08 ARA-10 EA-09 EUR-12 NEA-10
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 CU-04 FRB-01 OMB-01
ITC-01 AGRE-00 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 OIC-02
SIL-01 STR-04 TRSE-00 CIEP-02 CEA-01 /152 W
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INFO USMISSION GENEVA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: UN, ECOSOC, EGEN

SUBJ: ECOSOC ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION (JANUARY 11-14):
CONSUMER PROTECTION

(A) GENEVA 5740 (B) STATE 182146 (C) GENEVA 6363

1. SUMMARY: AS NOTED IN SEPTTEL, THE ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION OF ECOSOC AGREED TO INCLUDE IN ECOSOC'S PROGRAM OF WORK A REQUEST THAT THE SYG PRESENT A BRIEF REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE UN SYSTEM ON CONSUMER PROTECTION, FOR CONSIDERATION UNDER ITEM 1 (GENERAL DEBATE) AT THE 63RD (SUMMER) SESSION. END SUMMARY.

2. DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL FROM REFTSLS THAT, AT THE 61ST ECOSOC SESSION IN GENEVA LAST SUMMER, DR. DOROTHY WILNER, REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UN OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF CONSUMER UNIONS (AN ACCREDITED NGO), WORKED ACTIVELY FOR THE INCLUSION OF ECOSOC'S AGENDA OF AN ITEM ON CONSUMER PROTECTION, WITH A VIEW TO SETTING IN MOTION A STUDY THAT MIGHT LEAD TO SUCH STEPS AS MODEL GUIDELINES, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO COUNTRIES NEEDING
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HELP IN FORMULATING AND ENFORCING STANDARDS, ETC. WE AND OTHER DELEGATIONS WERE NOT PREPARED TO TAKE AN INITIATIVE AT THE OVERLOADED 61ST ECOSOC ON THIS NEW SUBJECT BUT, CONSISTENT WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTION (REFTEL B), OUR DELEGATION SUGGESTED TO DR. WILNER THAT SHE APPROACH A SYMPATHETIC DELEGATION TO GET THE MATTER BEFORE THE ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION WITH THE OBJECT OF

INCLUDING IT ON ECOSOC'S AGENDA FOR 1977. WE SAID WE WOULD IN PRINCIPLE SUPPORT SUCH AN INITIATIVE.

3. AS A RESULT OF FURTHER LOBBYING BY DR. WILNER, INCLUDING LETTERS SENT TO SOME 13 MISSIONS, INTERESTED DELEGATIONS COORDINATED AN INITIATIVE AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION, WHERE THE MATTER WAS TAKEN UP AT SOME LENGTH IN AN INFORMAL MEETING OF THE FULL MEMBERSHIP. THE PRINCIPAL PRESENTATIONS WERE BY COLOMBIA AND THE US, WITH GOOD SUPPORT FROM MEXICO AND THE NETHERLANDS (WHERE IOCU HEADQUARTERS IS LOCATED). OTHERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN PRIOR CONSULTATIONS WERE SYMPATHETIC BUT DID NOT SPEAK UP. THE PROPOSAL WAS TO TAKE THE FIRST STEP IN A GRADUAL APPROACH, WITH NO COMMITMENTS TO EACH NEXT STEP, I.E. TO ASK THE SECRETARIAT IN COORDINATION WITH THE ACC TO PREPARE A BRIEF REPORT (INVOLVING NO NEW EXPENSES) ON WHAT HAS OR IS BEING DONE WITHIN THE UN SYSTEM ON CONSUMER PROTECTION (E.G. IN THE TNC COMMISSION AND PERHAPS UNCTAD, FAO, WHO) FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE 63RD SESSION. ECOSOC COULD THEN DECIDE WHETHER ANYTHING FURTHER WAS WARRANTED, SUCH AS A STUDY IN DEPT WITH RECOMMENDATIONS, ON THE BASIS OF WHICH A LATER ECOSOC SESSION COULD DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO INITIATE SUBSTANTIVE ACTION, E.G. ALONG THE LINES OF THE IOCU SUGGESTIONS. SO AS TO MINIMIZE RESISTANCE TO A "NEW ITEM", COLOMBIA AND THE US SUGGESTED SUBSUMING THIS QUESTION UNDER ITEM 23 OF THE 63RD SESSION (INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND COORDINATION WITHIN THE UN SYSTEM).

4. OPPOSITION OR DOUBTS WERE EXPRESSED BY USSR, FRG, UNCLASSIFIED

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GREECE AND NIGERIA, GENERALLY ON GROUNDS THAT NOT ENOUGH WAS KNOWN, THAT THE AGENDA WAS OVERLOADED, THAT THE MATTER WAS OF LOW PRIORITY, AND/OR THAT THIS WOULD INVOLVE THE UN IN A NEW AREA AND ON NEW COSTLY PROJECTS WHERE IT DID NOT BELONG. (FRANCE, WHICH WAS NEGATIVE IN INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS, DID NOT SPEAK.) OPPOSITION DID NOT PERSIST, HOWEVER, IN THE FAVE OF REJOINDERS RE THE MODEST, TENTATIVE NATURE OF THIS FIRST STEP AND RE THE BROAD IMPACT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION. PAKISTAN (PRESIDENT OF G-77), WHILE RESERVED ON THE EVENTUAL RESULTS, ACCEPTED THE PROPOSAL.

5. ECOSOC SECRETARY SUGGESTED SUBSUMING THE MATTER UNDER ITEM 1 (HAVING APPARENTLY BEEN TOLD BY SOVIETS THEY WOULD NOT ACCEPT ITEM 23), TO WHICH WE AND THE OTHER PROPONENTS RAISED NO OBJECTIONS IN ORDER TO AVOID FURTHER CONTROVERSY. THE ECOSOC PRESIDENT (SMID OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA) QUICKLY DECLARED INFORMAL CONSENSUS, WHICH WAS CONFIRMED IN SUBSEQUENT FORMAL ADOPTION OF THE REVISED PROGRAM OF WORK.

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Disposition Comment:
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